

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 19, 2018

Agenda Item: Montana's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 Minutes

Background: Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is an always-fatal neurologic disease like mad cow disease that affects deer, elk, moose and caribou. It usually takes 1½ - 2 years from animal infection to death. Given enough time, perhaps decades, to infect a large portion of a herd ($\geq 20\%$), CWD can cause population declines of $\geq 30\%$. There are no known risks to livestock or humans. Montana found its first case in the wild in October 2017.

Previous Montana plans spoke to general CWD management, but did not lay out specific actions and who is responsible for those actions. We have developed an action-specific plan for surveillance for CWD, a management response to finding it, and a plan to inform the public about the disease, the risk it poses to Montana's wildlife, and the necessary actions to manage it. These specific actions are covered by Environmental Assessments of 2005 and 2013.

On November 7, 2017 FWP presented a draft *Montana CWD Management* plan to the Commission. That was draft 16 of the document. Based on public comment, and the work of both the internal FWP CWD Action Team and the CWD Citizen Panel, the final draft presented to the commission is draft 20. It differs from the earlier draft in ways outlined in the *Montana CWD Management Plan Update and Information and Information about 2017-2018 Surveillance and Special Hunts* found in the Commission packet along with the final draft plan.

Public Involvement Process & Results: This detailed plan was developed by FWP's internal CWD Action Team and thoroughly vetted with a CWD Citizen Advisory Panel. This 12-person panel includes at least one person from each FWP region and represents a diversity of backgrounds including conservation organizations like the Mule Deer Foundation, ranchers, livestock animal scientists, veterinarians, sportsmen, and others. They have met for four 2-day meetings to learn about CWD, what other states are doing, and to review and comment on early drafts of the plan. All the meetings have been open to the public with an opportunity to comment. The earlier draft plan was out for public comment from Nov 7 to Dec 8, 2017, and we received 201 comments. Most spoke to wolves and how natural predation can help with CWD management. Others that spoke specifically to the plan were in general support of FWP's management direction. All comments are included in the Commission Packet.

Alternatives and Analysis: Without a specific plan to look for, respond to and inform the public about CWD we will be ill-prepared to manage a disease that can have a substantial impact on Montana's wildlife and economy.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the Commission adopt the Montana CWD Management Plan as presented by FWP.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the Montana Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan as presented by FWP.